



United States
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Service

FACT SHEET

USDA at Work for Agriculture in Afghanistan September 2009

Agriculture is the main source of income for the Afghanistan economy. Despite the fact that only 12 percent of Afghanistan's total land area is arable and less than 6 percent is currently cultivated, 80 percent of Afghanistan's population is involved in farming, herding or both. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is helping Afghanistan revitalize its agricultural sector through a variety of activities aimed to strengthen the capacity of the Afghan government, rebuild agricultural markets, and improve management of natural resources.

USDA Representation. USDA currently has a Foreign Service Officer and an Expert Advisor in Kabul and intends to expand the office in the coming months. Since 2003, USDA has deployed 56 people for medium- and long- term assignments in Afghanistan. USDA has also provided roughly \$229 million in food aid to Afghanistan since 2003.

Trilateral Working Groups. In May 2009, the United States, Afghanistan and Pakistan agreed to establish three working groups on food security, trade corridors and water management. Each country will name six to eight members to the working groups to address these issues. The working groups are expected to begin by summer 2009.

Provincial Reconstruction Teams. In Afghanistan, PRTs are led by the U.S. Department of Defense and are typically

composed of about 50-100 military personnel (both force protection and civil affairs personnel) and a few civilians. The PRT agricultural expert is one of only a few civilians on the PRT; the others usually being U.S. Department of State representatives and U.S. Agency for International Development field program officers.

Currently, USDA has 11 agricultural experts and one PRT liaison officer, each serving a 1-year assignment in Afghanistan. USDA plans to more than triple the number of agriculture staff in Afghanistan by the end of 2009. All people selected, trained, and deployed for these assignments do so on a voluntary basis.

For PRTs, projects vary depending on the needs of the province. Projects have ranged from installing windmills to pump water for irrigation and livestock, training veterinarians to detect and treat parasites, rehabilitating a university's agricultural research laboratory, stabilizing eroded river banks and irrigation canals, developing post-harvest storage facilities, rehabilitating degraded orchards, mentoring provincial directors of agriculture to help them improve their services to farmers, and reforestation. All projects are aimed at helping Afghanistan reconstruct the physical and institutional infrastructure of its agricultural sector.

Technical Assistance. Ongoing USDA technical assistance has helped establish the Afghan Conservation Corps (ACC) which, along with the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock (MAIL), has led to the planting of more than five million trees on Afghanistan's devastated landscape, the ongoing construction of agricultural extension centers in half of Afghanistan's provinces, the training of numerous key Afghan agricultural officials, and the initiation of a national system to control animal disease.

FAS, along with USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service and Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES), provide technical assistance and training to help build Afghanistan's national capacity to detect and control animal diseases. A CSREES veterinarian is in the final year of a 3-year assignment in Afghanistan, coordinating short-term assignments with land-grant universities (University of Georgia, Michigan State University, and Texas A&M University) and other USDA experts provide expertise and training to Afghanistan's MAIL staff, Kabul University veterinary and animal health faculty, and others in animal disease surveillance, data analysis, field response, lab diagnostics, and national planning for disease control. Under an agreement with FAS, Fort Valley State University, an 1890's land-grant university in Georgia, produced an illustrated handbook of animal diseases of Afghanistan.

USDA provided technical guidance to Afghanistan's Ministry of Higher Education to improve the Ministry's use of USDA monetized food aid proceeds to build university teaching capacity in the agricultural and veterinary sciences. Similar assistance was given to MAIL in programming monetized food aid proceeds for use in improving its ability to deliver extension services. Efforts in agricultural extension led to the development of a prototype district-level agricultural extension facility and staffing model. The

funds have also supported the construction of 17 provincial agricultural centers for extension and cultural activities. Activities to assist in agricultural extension will focus on horticultural products. FAS has signed an agreement with the University of California-Davis to build MAIL's capacity to produce agricultural extension materials.

In 2003, USDA, in collaboration with the U.S. Department of State, the Afghan Government, and the United Nations Office for Project Services, established the ACC, with the goal of putting thousands of unemployed Afghans to work. USDA has provided technical guidance to assist the ACC and MAIL in developing a pistachio forest management plan for rehabilitating degraded pistachio woodlands. In 2006, participating villages realized a 65-percent increase in income from pistachio nuts, with further growth realized in 2007. This project is being expanded to include other villages. USDA technical specialists from the Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Forest Service have also provided training on improving the management of tree nurseries and on improving seed collection and storage, as well as soil and water conservation.

U.S.-Based Training. The Cochran Fellowship Program (CFP) provides short-term training in the United States to help countries develop market-driven food systems and increase trade links with U.S. agribusinesses. In 2008, the CFP hosted eight agricultural extension agents from Afghanistan. Since initiating CFP training activities for Afghanistan in 2004, two Afghan men participated in animal disease diagnosis and 14 Afghan women participated in a training program on the role of women in small agricultural enterprise development.

The Norman E. Borlaug International Agricultural Science and Technology Fellows Program (Borlaug Program) provides six to eight week collaborative research training for entry-level scientists and policymakers from developing and middle-income countries.

Since 2006, 11 Afghans have participated in the Borlaug Program to increase collaboration between Afghanistan's universities and U.S. faculty and scientists in the areas of animal health, post-harvest processing, and plant protection.

The Faculty Exchange Program brings university instructors of agricultural economics and sciences to the United States to work with U.S. professors to upgrade their technical knowledge and develop new and revised courses for their universities at home. Since 2006, USDA has hosted two participants each year from Kabul University for a total of six to date. USDA anticipates an additional two people will participate in 2009. Participants have been teachers of horticulture, soil science, and entomology.

Food Assistance. USDA has provided food assistance to Afghanistan through two food assistance programs—the Food for Progress (FFPr) and the McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition (McGovern-Dole) programs. Since 2003, USDA has provided roughly \$229 million in food aid to Afghanistan. The FFPr improves nutrition and supports agricultural and economic development projects in developing countries that are emerging democracies and are introducing or expanding free enterprise in their agricultural sectors. The McGovern-Dole Program helps promote education, child development, and food security in low-income, food-deficit countries that are committed to universal education. The program provides donations of U.S. agricultural products, as well as financial and technical assistance, for school feeding and maternal and child nutrition projects.

In FY 2009, USDA will provide Afghanistan with \$32 million in food assistance under FFPr. This figure includes a \$15 million wheat agreement signed in April 2009 with Shelter for Life International. Proceeds from the sale of wheat in Afghanistan will be used to fund the expansion of irrigated land, expand market access, and provide credit. USDA will also provide an additional \$17 million in FFPr assistance directly to the Government of Afghanistan. Proceeds from the sale of soybean oil donated to the government will continue initiatives begun under Afghanistan's FY 2008 FFPr agreement, with a focus on expansion of wheat production through procurement and distribution of wheat seed.

In March 2008, USDA allocated \$10.3 million through a government-to-government FFPr grant with Afghanistan. The grant provided 5,500 metric tons of soybean oil for sale in Afghanistan to support agricultural development. USDA food assistance to Afghanistan in FY 2008 also included a \$10.2 million FFPr agreement with Roots of Peace to enhance grape and orchard production and provide business and credit services. In addition, World Vision implemented a McGovern-Dole school feeding program, which provided for take-home rations to students, teachers, and school personnel in more than 500 schools.

General information about FAS programs, resources, and services is available on the Internet at the FAS home page: <http://www.fas.usda.gov>.